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Volume 12 Number 10

Home Theatre

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Letter from the Editor 4

Fast Glass 5

In the House

Should you add an HDTV to your home theatre? 6

Finishing interior happiness 9

Technology planning at the blueprint stage

Home theatre on the cheap 10

A broke movie lover claims the slogan of how he made his home theatre dreams come true on a shoestring budget

Of the Mind

Digital Photography Journal 12

Marvyn's digital magazine files

Digital Living

TV on DVD 13

Your favourite TV shows, digitized and packaged for posterity

Small-Screen Corner 14

Reviews: Battery/Kongki, Pam Pollock

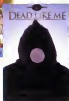
Contests

Letter of the month 4

Photo spree 12

In selected regions ...

Look for more news, product reviews and features



Ultimate notebook meets virtual office

In our search for the perfect combination of size and performance, we came up with the E-Note series – notebooks that make no compromises. Starting with an Intel Centrino processor, we added one of the brightest LCD screens on the market, a 10-hour extended life battery* and a Quad Band wireless antenna, all packed into an ultra slim aluminum and carbon fibre package that weighs a mere 2.4 lbs.



Life Cycle



Maths Computing in 1999



Same to get even the most devoted PC users thinking, Apple unveiled its newest Mac the other ES Aug 31, at Apple Expo in Paris, France. In the old tradition, the entire computer is self-contained. However, unlike the seemingly desk lamp inspired flat screen Mac, the G5 packs the computer's guts behind the 17 or 20-inch LCD, resulting in a profile two inches deep.

Expected to ship in September, Apple was accepting pre orders through its Apple Store at prices like:

The base model comes with a 1.6 GHz G5 (64-bit) processor, 80 GB serial ATA hard drive and a slot-loading combo drive (DVD and CD-R/RW) packed behind the 17-inch display for US\$1,299 (approx. \$1,680).

The top of the line as offered for pre order at US\$1,699 (approx. \$2,400) replaces the 17-inch display with a 20-inch, doubles the capacity of the hard drive, offers a 600 MHz frontside bus (533 MHz on the lower end model) and ups the G5 processor to 2.0 GHz.

Apple iMac G5

JVC recently announced two palm-sized walkies to its line of digital movie cameras.

Both new cameras in the Everio line—the GZ-MC100 and GZ-MC200 ship with a 4 GB Microdrive card and allow for up to 60 minutes of full-quality video or thousands of high-resolution still images, the company says. A 2.12-megapixel CCD offers an effective 1.2 million pixels when shooting video and 2 million for still photography.

The cameras will ship with CyberLink iVSO Solution allowing users to edit and produce DVDs after transferring video to the PC using via USB 2.0 or direct from the Microdrive via an off-board card reader.

Both models will ship in October with a suggested street price of US\$1,199.95 for the GZ-MC100 model and US\$1,299.95 for the GZ-MC200 that includes a rotating grip (approx. \$1,530 and \$1,680 respectively).



JVC Digital Movie camera

Sony has a fortunate knack for industrial design—and a not so fortunate knack with proprietary storage media.

The Cyber-shot DSC-M1 was announced in about mid September and will be available in December for about US\$800 (approx. \$700), the company says.

The camera is about the size of a deck of cards when closed and its 2.5-inch LCD screen swivels up and rotates 270 degrees.

Playing particular attention to its movie mode, the camera captures video in DGA and records five seconds of video before and three after a still image is snapped, a process Sony dubs "hybrid record mode."

Up to 27 minutes of HGA video at 30 frames per second can be shot on a 512 MB Memory Stick PRO Duo media card, not included, the company says. As a still camera, the DSC-M1 includes a 3.3 optical zoom Carl Zeiss lens and captures images at 3:1 megapixels.



Sony Cyber-shot DSC-M1

While Nokia's 9200 line of communications doesn't have a significant impact on North American cell phone users, models in the line became status symbols and highly desired gadgets in Europe.

The 9300 looks to be the follow-up device and incorporates a more ergonomic QWERTY keyboard, Bluetooth and infrared connectivity for wireless syncing with a desktop or laptop computer and a USB interface for wired syncing, Nokia says.

Like its predecessors, the 9300 opens claims to transform from a completely large cell phone to a data device for email, web browsing, instant messaging, scheduling and a variety of other office applications.

Due out in Q1 of 2005, the 9300 Communicator is expected to carry a price tag of US\$499 (approx. \$1,105).



Nokia 9300

When inspiration meets function, creative sparks fly.

Creative Combo

If you have a passion for digital photography, you will appreciate the total creative control the G400 Creative Combo offers. Take high quality pictures with the DiMAGE G400 4.0 megapixel camera and then print brilliant snapshots in seconds. It's easy. It's fast. And it's convenient. Get inspired today and then just plug, play and print your work of art.

The incredible G400 Creative Combo comes with Konica Minolta's high performance DiMAGE G400 digital camera, an Epson Stylus Photo R200 printer, glossy 4x6 and 8.5x11 photo paper, ArcSoft PhotoImpression Software v.3.0 and an additional USB cable. It has everything you need to go from click to print.

Use the G400 Creative Combo to capture and cherish those precious memories forever.



DiMAGE A2

Also don't forget to check out the DiMAGE A2 – the next generation SLR-type camera with all the bells and whistles to make digital photography fun. Features include innovative 3D AF, anti-shake technology, 7x optical zoom, a super-fast shutter speed (1/4,000), and 8 megapixels of brilliant clarity. Konica Minolta digital cameras redefine style and photography.



Should You Add an HDTV to Your Home Theatre?

Should you add an HDTV set to your home theatre system? For any gadget-mad geek, the question seems like a no-brainer: surely the answer is "yes!" However, while an HDTV definitely delivers superior picture quality when compared to a conventional television set, it may not be the right choice for you, especially if you're working in a space where a TV larger than 30" won't work.



Flat Panel, Projector, or Box?

For those considering buying an HDTV, there are three options: flat panel, projector, or box. Flat-panel HDTVs come in either plasma or LCD varieties. When you choose a monitor of visual preference, typically higher-priced LCD flat panels tend to give their plasma equivalents, but the biggest flat panels are offered in the plasma format. As noted, box flat panels aren't cheap; for instance, a 36" Sony KLV-36M1 LCD WEGA costs \$4,999.99 (MSRP at www.sonystyle.ca).

LCD home theatre projectors are a great space saver, as long as you have a flat surface of which wall suitable to project. Projector screens will deliver better image quality and a place to put the projector. They can also be used to display PC images, which means you can play video games your way: most wall. As for price? The Sony VPU-HD1 is MSRP \$2,999.99 at www.sonystyle.ca, it can project a 100" TV image at a distance of 2.7 meters from the wall.

Conventional box HDTVs are less expensive than flat panels and don't require projection room, but they still eat up space. For instance, a 36" Panasonic CT-34W03 (MSRP \$2,999.99 at www.panasonic.ca) is about 2" tall, 3" wide, and 2" deep (34.5 cm x 34.5 cm x 5.1 cm); it also weighs about 17.5 lbs (7.9 kg). My advice: If you can afford a space-saving flat-panel buy it instead.

What Makes HDTV Better

The reason HDTV (High Definition Television) is better than analog TV has to do with the number of horizontal lines used to "draw" a TV picture on your screen. On an old-fashioned North American analog TV—a.k.a. an NTSC TV (NTSC being the acronym for the National Television Systems Committee)—the picture is made up of 480 "interlaced" lines. This means that the odd-numbered lines are drawn on the screen first, followed by the even-numbered lines; what you're seeing is two sequential 240-line images, 30 times a second.

An HDTV display uses more lines to draw its picture. This means more detail and thus higher resolution. Currently, there are two HDTV formats in popular use: 1080i and 720p. 1080i means that the picture has 1080 lines—twice the number used in an NTSC picture—interlaced in the conventional odd-even pattern. 720p (progressive) means that the image has 720 lines, but they are scanned on the display progressively. This means you get all 720 lines at once in a single image.

Add the fact that HDTV is a widescreen format—compared to the NTSC format based on movie studio dimensions from the 1930s—that uses 5.1 Dolby Digital AC-3 surround sound, and you can see the advantages of adding an HDTV set to a home theatre system.

Limits of Adding an HDTV to a Home Theatre System

Will adding an HDTV to your home theatre system give you the picture you're looking for? Definitely. However, unless you are using a DVD player specifically designed to play HDTV DVDs, you won't get HDTV quality images on your screen.

The reason is that most DVD players are designed to work with NTSC television sets. Although feeding their outputs to HDTV monitors will provide better pictures (especially in widescreen mode), because the DVD player's digital video doesn't have to be converted to lower-quality analog as, you still won't be seeing HDTV. When using an HDTV monitor to watch VHS tapes, you will get a sharper picture but the flow of the low-resolution VHS format will be readily apparent.

On the pro HDTV side, adding an HDTV system to your home theatre will allow you to watch HDTV channels currently available on cable and satellite TV. As well, it will position your home theatre to keep up with the next wave of technological change; when HDTV DVDs become widely available, you'll be ready.

My personal preference? Having watched "The Abysmal" on a Panasonic TC-32LX22 32" LCD HDTV (MSRP \$2,999.99 at www.panasonic.ca) connected to a DVD player, I can't say enough for the picture quality. As well, I hadn't realized how much of the letter-boxed widescreen image was being chopped off by my 36" Sony NTSC TV. Given a choice, I definitely prefer watching DVDs on an HDTV, even though I currently don't receive HDTV via satellite.

By James Connors



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USB flash drives: Setting up a sneaker net

SanDisk Cruzer Titanium

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Pros: | Cons: |
| • Shock and rugged casing | • Longer than other flash drives |
| • Retractable USB connector | • No USB extension cable included |
| • Useful software included in the drive | • Only one storage capacity available |

Price: \$108 (from USB 128 GB) as tested **Price per MB:** \$0.32

Web site: www.sandisk.com **Carrying method:** tension clip, eyehol for lanyard or key ring **Dimensions:** 3mm x 21mm x 15mm
Format: Cruzer Titanium 512MB

A brushed metal casing, retractable USB connector and a superfluous but



still neon blue light behind the slider for retracting slide to indicate connection and read/write make the Cruzer Titanium a handsome unit. USB 2.0 compatibility retaining transfer speeds of up to 75 MB/sec read and 13 MB/sec write make it practical too.

But save the Titanium is also the longest of the units tested. This likely won't present problems for desktop

users but could make things awkward for laptop users with either side or mis-mounted USB ports.

Open plugging in the drive, users find a few bits of handy Windows-only software like a contacts management and synchronization program and a security / password feature.

SanDisk Cruzer Micro

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Pros: | Cons: |
| • Cool look | • No USB extension cable included |
| • Protective sleeve | • Few few options for portability |
| • Accessories available | • Limited storage capacities |

Price: \$75 (from US\$14-05) as tested **Price per MB:** \$0.25

Web site: www.sandisk.com **Carrying method:** Lanyard, key ring, not included **Dimensions:** 12mm x 23mm x 56mm
Format: Cruzer Micro 256MB



The Cruzer Titanium's younger brother, the Cruzer Micro seems to aim itself at a younger audience who are more likely to be carrying MP3s and school projects than Power Point presentations and annual reports. While it's a neat looking drive with a super bright blue LED mounted at the top to indicate connection and data transfer and a clear acrylic casing, it's not the most practical

given the placement of the eyehol to which users can attach the included lanyard or a keyring. Putting the eyehol on the base of the drive, at the opposing end to the USB connector means that the drive itself is less likely to be lost but it also means users will either have to leave their keys dangling from the USB port, detach the drive from the keychain or use a lanyard.

USB flash drives (or key drives, pen drives, thumb drives etc.) are becoming all but standard equipment for computer users deal with an ever-expanding wealth of data. The floppy disk's patry 1.44 MB of storage space has long since yielded its position for transferring anything other than simple documents and tiny pictures.

Enter the flash drive. Flash drives offer numerous benefits over other storage options like the once-dominant floppy disk and even writable CDs or DVDs, online drives etc.

Benefits:

- Solid state electronics
- Variable storage capacities
- Small
- Very portable
- Fast read / write speeds of up to 17 MB/sec read, 13 MB/sec write
- Supporting USB 2.0

Drawbacks:

- High cost per megabyte
- Easily forgotten or lost
- USB ports sometimes inaccessible
- Drives required for non-MC, 2000 or XP Windows PCs, for OS 9.0, Macs and Linux installations

Verbatim Store 'n' Go USB Drive

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| Pros: | Cons: |
| • Password protection | • Covering too fat |
| • USB extension cable included | • Eyehol on the cap means the drive could be lost |
| • Quick release lanyard | • Silver plastic piping can fall off with extended use |

Price: \$184 (from US\$ 149.99) as tested **Price per MB:** \$0.30

Web site: www.verbatim.com **Carrying method:** Lanyard, key ring, **Dimensions:** 16mm 21mm x 67mm **Format:** Store 'n' Go 512 MB

The fact that Verbatim's Store 'n' Go flash drives keep the eyehol for connecting a key ring or lanyard on the cap as opposed to on the body of the drive is both a good and a bad thing. On the plus side, users can swing the drive attached to the upper of a bag, or a keyring or on a lanyard and be able to quickly detach it, plug it in and use it. On the negative, most users will likely want to hold on to the valuable part of the unit (namely, the drive itself) as opposed to the cap. With extended use, the once tight fitting of the cap and drive can become loose—the tested unit eventually came apart from the keychain it was attached to and ended up floating free in my pocket.

In sticking with the same relatively wide casing as with previous flash drives in the Store 'n' Go line, Verbatim seems to forget that many computer users have just about every USB port filled. The flat casing of the unit seemed tended to force other USB plugs aside. Ports beside the drive can still be used, but be prepared to do some wiggling around to fit.

Crucial Gizmo 2.0

Price: \$129 (from US\$99.95) as tested **Price per MB:** \$0.25

Web site: www.crucial.com **Carrying method:** Lanyard, key ring, **Dimensions:** 18mm x 16mm x 60mm **Format:** Gizmo 2.0 512MB

Pros:

- Tiny
- Password protection
- Very "business-looking"

Cons:

- USB protector cap easily lost
- Unattractive for layman use
- No USB extension cable included

Cruze! takes a no-nonsense approach to portable storage with the Gnome! It's reinvented white, grey, case and simple green LEDs are a big change from the translucent red, clear and metal casings and super bright multi-colored LEDs of other units tested.

A tiny magnet on the Flash drive part of the unit makes carrying the drive in a key ring somewhat impractical; users will have to look out a tiny key ring or deal with an uncooperative lump of plastic in their pockets. The biggest problem I found in testing the Gnome! 2.0 was that the tiny protective cap that sits over the USB connector was constantly going missing, hiding under papers in my desk or finding its way under my keyboard.

Imaga Mini**Pros:**

- Tiny form factor
- Changeable coloured casings
- Key tag-style carrying lanyard
- Lights up USB extension cable included

Cons:

- Connector exposed to dust and small particles
- Allowed to detach key from lanyard
- Limited capacities available (up to 512MB)

Price: \$51 (from US\$39.95) as tested **Price per MB:** \$0.40
Web site: www.imaga.com **Carrying method:** Lanyard, key ring
Dimensions: 28mm x 15mm x 43mm **Tested:** Imaga Mini 128MB

Whether flash drive among itself in the youth market, the Imaga Mini comes with three changeable coloured casings (blue, black and orange), a USB extension cable that lights up bright blue at both ends and a plastic key that permits the Imaga Mini to be "a cool way to take your music, photos and games with you."

Imaga drives come pre-installed with a Windows executable that launches a Web installer to download and install all versions of useful applications (see sidebar "Portable mail client").

The Imaga Mini may seem a bit out of place as a serious business offering; it's gorgeous attempts at being cool make it hard to take the drive seriously despite the fact that it is every bit as functional as other 2GB USB drives of similar capacity.

Imaga Mini**Pros:**

- Smart industrial design
- Also works wireless
- Available applications in various functionality

Cons:

- Fast testing
- Fixed / write light hard to see
- No extension cable included

Price: \$95 (from US\$99.95) as tested **Price per MB:** \$3.40

Web site: www.imaga.com **Carrying method:** Magnet clip, keyring for lanyard or key ring (neither included)
Dimensions: 11mm x 29mm x 87mm **Tested:** Mini 128MB

Imaga's Mini USB Flash drive strikes a great balance between form and function. A little window atop the front middle of the drive so users can write a phone number or email address in case the unit is lost and some kind read area has in her way, clear to return it.

While the casing is plastic, it's designed to look like metal and the cap snaps over the USB connector and a metal loop snaps in to place a ringed the drive so users don't have to worry about losing it. Also, the tension clipped the possibility of attaching a key ring or lanyard makes a versatile. That said, it's a little on the chunky side, making it more difficult (but not impossible) to access adjacent USB ports.

HP USB Digital Drive**Pros:**

- Direct transfer to SD-enabled devices like Pocket PCs
- Doubles as an SD memory card reader / writer

Cons:

- No storage media included
- Larger than USB flash drive
- Key too loose

Price: \$119.95 **Price per MB:** NA
Web site: www.hp.com **Carrying method:** NA
Dimensions: 60mm x 54mm x 35mm **Tested:** Using SanDisk 256MB Ultra II high speed SD card

While HP's USB Digital Drive requires that users purchase the storage media separately, it may be a good choice for those who have already made an investment in Secure Digital (SD) or Multimedia Cards (MMC). The Digital Drive is much wider than a USB flash drive but a short USB cable that folds into the device helps to keep it out of the way, enough that users still have access to other USB ports.

Perhaps the biggest benefit of HP's product over standard flash drives is that it can double as a memory card reader / writer and allows for direct transfer of files from the computer to a device with an SD or MMC slot.

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Kingston DataTraveler II

Pros:

- Excellent security / management features
- Sleek design without being garish

Cons:

- No USB extension cable included
- Cap super tight
- Cap easily misplaced

Price: \$60 Price per GB: \$160 Web site: www.kingston.com

Carrying method: Lanyard Dimensions*: 2.8mm x 22mm x 32mm

Tested: DataTraveler II (\$294)

Kingston Technology, already a major name in computer RAM and digital media, will soon be releasing its latest innovation of USB flash drives. We got our hands on some engineering samples before the official release in mid-September.

Upon inserting the DataTraveler II into an available USB port, users will notice two files pre-installed on the drive. First is a handy utility called SecureTraveler and second, its manual in PDF format. Secure Traveler allows users to password protect a portion of the drive using a graphical interface.

Clearly aimed at business users and mobile professionals, the DataTraveler II is the introductory model in Kingston's new line of USB flash drives.

DataTraveler II Plus

Price: \$80 Price per GB: \$160 Web site: www.kingston.com

Carrying method: Lanyard Dimensions*: 2.8mm x 22mm x 32mm

Tested: DataTraveler II Plus (\$294)

Pros:

- Industry-leading transfer speeds
- Excellent security features
- Sleek design

Cons:

- No USB extension cable
- Cap too tight
- Cap easily misplaced

The DataTraveler II Plus has the same features and the snap-down model but housed in a dark, heavy grey case as opposed to its younger sibling's not-so-sleek, shiny grey case.

The excellent security feature is again present, when users insert the drive, only files on the root and the SecureTraveler application are visible. Beneficial files to be shared among co-workers or students etc. while still maintaining the privacy of protected files. When users double-click the security icon, a password prompt screen comes up, after which time the protected portion of the drive becomes visible. Transferring files between secure and non-secure storage is difficult as users can only access one part of the drive at a time. The DataTraveler II Plus gets the additional title name as a result of its fast read / write speeds. 17 MB/sec is available in current USB 2.0 flash drives but the Plus's 16 MB/sec read is the fastest in our roundup.

By Andrew Moore-Crispin

*Measured [depth x width x length] with cap on where applicable

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Front-row seats: setting up your own home theatre

Getting set up with home theatre may seem overwhelming at first, especially if you start looking at incredibly high-end systems. It's easy to break \$50,000 once you start adding up the power amplifier, the earth-shaking subwoofer, the ten-foot display... well, stop. Unless you're dedicating an entire room to your popcorn palace, you can probably make do with a much more modest setup.

There are three main things to consider when putting together a modestly-priced home theatre setup: the DVD player, the amplifier/reciever (and speakers), and the screen.

All-in-one, one for all

When setting up a home theatre system from scratch, you'll have to source and match the main components needed for playback: DVD player, receiver and speaker set. For most users, this becomes a big pain, because you have to start paying attention to little things. Little things like:

Do the number of audio channel outputs on the DVD player match the audio inputs on the receiver? If your DVD player has only two channels for analogue output, you'll only get stereo playback from the receiver. You'll get the full effect of both DVD and receiver feature six-channel analogue output (the old-school "RCA" style connectors), or optional coaxial SPDIF connectors.

Are your speakers the right match for the amplifier/reciever? Not only do you have to make sure you have enough speakers to give you full surround, you have to make absolutely sure that the speakers can handle



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In the Home

the output level of the receiver. If not, you may blow out your speakers when you inevitably try to achieve that floor-shaking volume during a particularly cool movie.

Will my subwoofer work?

It's worth noting that subwoofers come in powered and passive versions, which is another configuration headache to worry about. The receiver you choose may be for, but if you can't get a subwoofer to work with it, you'll want to clean your ears out listening to the tiny music you'll end up with sans-sub.

Thankfully for those on a more modest budget, all in-one home-theatre bundles are reasonably affordable, and generally do the job quite well. These packages come with the single-unit DVD/receiver, a subwoofer and all the satellite speakers you need for surround sound. Best of all, the components should all be matched up to work with each other...no guesswork required.

Of course, the all-in-one solution isn't always the perfect solution, especially if you want to use it as the hub for all of your other audio equipment. While most have inputs for other components like your old VCR or maybe a gaming console, you should make absolutely sure it's not guaranteed. Also, not all of these receivers have a cable-TV connector to check the specs on the back of the receiver itself.

Most importantly, for some buyers. Because these all-in-one systems come with the speaker set, there's a very good chance that the receiver won't have any audio outputs at all beyond the speaker terminals, no optical, no coaxial, and not even RCA connectors. If you need to feed audio to a television or to an external recording source (VCR), make sure that audio outputs are included.

The big screen

Once you have your DVD player, receiver and speakers selected, you'll need something to watch your movies on, and what you choose depends on the size of your room and how well you can block out ambient light...and, of course, your budget.

There are four main choices to consider for the screen these days. If you want to go big, rear-projection screens, plasma, LCD-rearview sets, and home projectors.

If you like your picture large, the cheapest of the three is rear-pro-

All wired up

Multiphased audio is certainly easy and handy, albeit all of the audio that used to come out of your television set. Not only is the sound quality amazing, but it's the right set, but you can actually hear things coming forward from the screen from behind you. The problem: you gotta wire all that stuff up.

When you take a look at photos of home-theatre systems on most consumer websites, there's always something missing: namely, the wires. When you're setting up your speakers you may find that your room looks less like a happy paradise and more like a radio shack.

Before you get started on the wires, you should have a clear vision of where the wires are going to go. The rear-channel wires may well be long enough to wrap 100% of them around the same side of the room, along a baseboard or some other out-of-sight place. If not, you may need to replace the wires with longer ones as long as the package doesn't use proprietary connectors. The wires leading to the rear channels don't have to be being gauges, but they at least need to be compatible with the connectors on the speakers and the receiver.



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jectors, for between \$2,000 and \$3,000 you can get a basic model of up to 60 inches. If you opt for the higher-quality and higher-resolution DLP version, budget \$4,000 and up. The downside of rear projection models is finding the space for them. Though they're far thinner than similarly-sized tube televisions, they can still take up massive amounts of floor space—and may be difficult to get up a flight of stairs.

If you want to go thinner, plasma screens are the hottest thing going. Plasma screens are between two and four inches thick, and if your wall is sturdy, the screen can be mounted directly onto the wall. Because each pixel element in a plasma screen is an individual fluorescent-style lamp, the picture quality is more vibrant, and because the pixels can be turned right off the colour black is displayed really well. Most manufacturers' plasma lines start at 40 inches, with brand-name models available for as low as \$4,000, the price spikes substantially as you start to get bigger. There's a downside though.

Plasma screens suck back power like crazy. If your wiring hasn't been upgraded, it may trip the breaker regularly, especially if you have it on the same circuit as your receiver/speakers set. The LCD screens are definitely more power saving, but more costly per inch. Though manufacturers have shown off prototypes of LCD screens larger than 30 inches, typically you won't find LCD screens at retail that are much larger than 30 inches—and even then you're probably best off at a price tag of \$6,000. The great news about LCD is its ability to show extremely high resolution on a smaller screen, even value-oriented models can display a full-size HDTV picture. For smaller rooms where you don't need such a large screen, an LCD monitor is an excellent choice. If you want a REAL big picture, there's always the home projection you can easily blow up the image from a projector to over 100 inches diagonally. If you don't have a big white wall though, you'll have to invest some in a white screen. It's also worth remembering that for a projector to be worth the investment, you'll need to be able to control the lighting and block light from outside the room, or the picture will be washed out.

By Sean Connolly

Amazon: DC-M720

www.amazon.ca

Estimated price: \$699

Though it seems a little long, Amazon's take on the DVD R40 model and supports both DVD Video and DVD Audio discs, this Amazon DVD player also features a built-in receiver and multi-channel decoder, giving you all of the features you find in home theaters. The M720's comes with five satellite speakers, and a subwoofer that acts as the speaker hub and the power controller. The main unit gets its power from the subwoofer via a long cable. All of the subwoofer controls are on the back of the paper, including auxiliary and HDMI inputs, and components, component, and S-Video outputs. The speakers are rated for a total of 400 watts output power, and the subwoofer should pack enough oomph when you want more than a

Sony: SDR-MD500

www.sony.ca

Estimated price: \$699

Sony's new "Direct" series offers stylish all-in-one DVD-based stereo receiver. Calling that player the model adds a nice touch to the DVD component, the ability to play back Super Audio CDs, too. The player looks up to five discs (DVD, Super Audio or regular CDs), has built-in AM/FM, and has a total output rating of 750 watts. The only feature compromise, component and S-Video outputs, there's no optical input.

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425, 427, 429, 431, 433, 435, 437, 439, 441, 443, 445, 447, 449, 451, 453, 455, 457, 459, 461, 463, 465, 467, 469, 471, 473, 475, 477, 479, 481, 483, 485, 487, 489, 491, 493, 495, 497, 499, 501, 503, 505, 507, 509, 511, 513, 515, 517, 519, 521, 523, 525, 527, 529, 531, 533, 535, 537, 539, 541, 543, 545, 547, 549, 551, 553, 555, 557, 559, 561, 563, 565, 567, 569, 571, 573, 575, 577, 579, 581, 583, 585, 587, 589, 591, 593, 595, 597, 599, 601, 603, 605, 607, 609, 611, 613, 615, 617, 619, 621, 623, 625, 627, 629, 631, 633, 635, 637, 639, 641, 643, 645, 647, 649, 651, 653, 655, 657, 659, 661, 663, 665, 667, 669, 671, 673, 675, 677, 679, 681, 683, 685, 687, 689, 691, 693, 695, 697, 699, 701, 703, 705, 707, 709, 711, 713, 715, 717, 719, 721, 723, 725, 727, 729, 731, 733, 735, 737, 739, 741, 743, 745, 747, 749, 751, 753, 755, 757, 759, 761, 763, 765, 767, 769, 771, 773, 775, 777, 779, 781, 783, 785, 787, 789, 791, 793, 795, 797, 799, 801, 803, 805, 807, 809, 811, 813, 815, 817, 819, 821, 823, 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each device, wireless networking, or home phone line networking. Another choice is to use the network that every house already has: its power lines.

Power line networking is not new, but unfortunately has it become a legitimate alternative. This is due in large part by Intel's (www.intel.com) development of PowerLine technology, which makes data transfer speeds of up to 14 Mbps possible and—more importantly—reliable and safe from electrical "noise." Intel claims that data rates of up to 100 Mbps over power lines may eventually be possible because of this development. Intel's technology was used to create the HomePlug 1.0 specification, which is set by the HomePlug Power Alliance (www.homeplug.org).

Intel, a semiconductor manufacturer, incorporates PowerPack onto chips, which are integrated into digital devices made by other companies, such as the networking adapters from D-Link (www.dlink.ca).

Users simply plug HomePlug compliant devices (in case of the current generation of PCs, drivers must be installed) into any power outlet in their home and the outlet will become a high-speed line for sharing data and broadband Internet access.

Manufacturers producing HomePlug 1.0-compliant devices include Asustek, D-Link, Linksys, D-Link, D-Link,



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Dell, Gateway, Gigabyte, Lenovo, HP, and Siemens Packard Bell, the top PC maker in the UK and France, has just announced that it will be integrating modems chip into the power supplies of some new PCs so users will only have to plug a single cord into an outlet to get power and network connectivity.

Though we're starting to see HomePlug-compliant PC adapters in retail shelves, other HomePlug devices—like routers that let you share the multimedia files on your PC with your stereo, television, or home theatre setup—are not yet widely available in North America.

But why go to the extent of any description when wireless options are widely available and affordable? One answer is that there can be coverage and interference issues with wireless, so it isn't an option in every home. Another answer is that it isn't an either/or proposition. Power line networking can be used in conjunction with a wireless network, as a back lane connected to wireless access points, in locations with coverage and/or interference issues.

Familiarity breeds opportunity

Because the HomePlug technology is familiar (who hasn't stuck a plug in an outlet?), affordable, and simple to install, it's also attracting the attention of service providers.

US cable giant, Comcast, for example, is testing HomePlug equipment in customers' homes. According to Mark Bowling, who oversees Comcast's technical and support operations, HomePlug allows customers to focus on the benefits of their service rather than the technical hurdles of installing and managing a home network.

"We are interested in how HomePlug technology can provide even more choice when it comes to placing PCs and wireless equipment in the

home," says Bowling.

In Cincinnati, Ohio, a regional electrical utility is working with Current Technologies (www.currenttechnologies.com) to roll out a new service that will provide broadband Internet and voice over IP services, along with electricity, of course, to customers through their power lines—no DSL, cable, or phone service required. To use this service (called BPL, or broadband over power line) for streaming media, data, or making phone calls, customers would just need to connect a HomePlug-compliant adapter—or a device with an integrated modem chip—into an outlet.

By Wayne Johnston

Beltin Power line Ethernet Adapter

www.beltin.com Estimated retail price: \$79

We looked at a pair of beltin power line adapters. One individually, each comes with an Ethernet cable, CD, and user manual. Setup is fairly simple: install drivers on your main PC (which is linked to your high-speed Internet connection), plug the adapter into the wall, connect it to your PC, and reboot. Repeat for other PCs you want on your network, then hit Configuration Utility on the main computer, which will find and connect all of the PCs listed, in 10s, under HomePlug-networks default.

The user manual is fairly clear, but Beltin does have 24-hour technical support if you run into trouble. Unfortunately, the Beltin adapters are not Mac OS compatible.

They are allowed not to plug adapters into standard power strips or surge protectors, which can degrade the signal. Beltin also offers an optional HomePlug-compliant surge protector (about \$50).

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Online DVD Rentals

The Internet has come through with yet another innovation for the lay-down in all of us. No longer do we have to make that terrible two-block trek to the video store to rent a movie, no, not now we can type our way to an online movie rental store, walk no further than our mailboxes to pick up our DVDs, and never have to worry about talking our way out of another late fee... all thanks to the wonderful world of online movie rental services.

Here's how online DVD rental stores work:

1. Sign up and pay a monthly fee (usually between \$20 and \$30)
2. Select a bunch of movies and wait a couple of days for the first lot to arrive via Canada Post
3. Watch the movies at your leisure and mail them back when ever you're ready (they arrive with prepaid mailer envelopes, so shipping is free)
4. Receive your next batch of movies automatically a few days after you mail back the first lot

Canada is home to over a dozen online movie rental stores, and they're all clamouring for our business. After taking advantage of all the free trial offers out there—you could spend about half a year going from side to side, using up all of the free two-week trial periods available—you'll eventually need to settle on a single service, preferably one that's fast, reliable, and has a wide selection of movies.

HLG did a bit of research to find out how four well-known online DVD rental stores stacked up against each other. Here are the results:

VHOnline.ca

VHOnline.ca is the only online DVD rental store we investigated that is also a major retailer, with about 50 physical locations in Western Canada. It's also the only service that offers six titles with monthly membership fees.

VHOnline's search engine for browsing titles in their inventory is powerful. Aside from sporting a healthy variety of searchable categories and genres, including recommendations, Showcase and Top 100, subscribers can also make use of a feature that lets them search by director and actor—really, for better or worse, allowed us

VHOnline.ca

1 Search for movies by genre, director, actor, or keyword.

2 Select a movie to rent.

3 Add movie to cart and checkout.

4 Receive movie via Canada Post.

5 Return movie via Canada Post.

6 Receive next batch of movies.

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to discover they had no moves by seminal cult film director John Waters. In fact, even though VHQOnline is one of the largest players in the Canadian online movie rental market, its selection of DVDs simply doesn't measure up to that of other services. They advertise that they have a stock of over a quarter million DVDs, but the number of unique titles is actually much smaller. Searches for classic films like *Alone* (Kurosawa's Seven Samurai) and television series like *Teen Peaks* came up empty. VHQOnline's greatest selling point is its pricing scheme. While many services offer a single membership package, VHQOnline provides three options with monthly fees: \$19.95 to rent into a maximum of three DVDs at a time, \$24.95 for a maximum of four and \$29.95 for a maximum of five. They also offer a video game rental service for PlayStation2, Xbox, and GameCube games at \$24.95 per month, allowing subscribers a maximum of two games at a time.

In addition to its primary rental processing centre in BC, VHQOnline recently opened a processing centre in Toronto to provide faster mail service to Eastern Canadians.

RelayRentals.ca

In the relatively new business of online movie renting, Ottawa-based RelayRentals.ca is about as close as you can get to a trusted name. The second oldest online rental service in Canada, RelayRentals has been in business for over two years and has an existing base of thousands of loyal subscribers.

With fewer than 1000 unique films, RelayRentals's library of titles is modest. It stocks a plenty of recent mainstream films in high volume, but little in the way of offbeat, classic, or independent titles. However, it does give vide exceptional library browsing and rating, including advanced



search options that allow users to query by actor, director, release date, and MPAA rating. RelayRentals is the most expensive service we evaluated and offers some ten membership options to choose from. DVD subscriptions start at \$19.95 to keep two movies at a time and go up to \$34.95 per month for a maximum of five movies. Video game packages offer one game at a time for \$14.95 and two at a time for \$29.95. Relative to other services, RelayRentals's best value is their combination package of two movies and two games for \$39.95.

Although younger services appear to be undercutting RelayRentals' prices for the time being, the company plans to launch a new Web site in coming months that should include price reductions and allow the site to remain competitive.

Zip.ca

Zip.ca offers Canadians a well rounded selection of 18,000 unique titles. Along with a complete assortment of new releases, Zip goes out of its way to cater to cinephiles and film revival followers by stocking a wide variety of independent and out-of-film.

Zip also stocks a large selection of Canadian films, including many older movies, like iconic Canadian director David Cronenberg's early horror film *Shivers* and the *Brave*. Unfortunately, Zip's search engine is a bit com-

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joined its competition, providing users with the ability to search only by film title or genre.

Zip tries to ensure that there are enough copies of blockbuster new releases to calculate amongst its mem-

ber display, taking orders of upcoming DVDs as the number of requests that subscribers make for particular titles. While the immediate availability of new releases can't be guaranteed, Zip has a system that takes into account the history of member requests. For example, if a subscriber has to wait for a new release because Zip has run out of copies, that subscriber is given priority the next time he or she is in a similar situation. Zip offers a simple subscription rate: \$24.95 per month, which allows users to take out four movies at a time. Tied with VHSorders, this is the best value of any service we saw. Like most online rental services, Zip's delivery is at the mercy of the postal service, but the company promises speedy same-day processing for all requests. Depending on where you live, Zip's Ottawa-based distribution centre, subscribers can depend on receiving their movies in between one and three business days from time of request.

MovieForMe.ca

Another old hand in the online movie rental biz, MovieForMe.ca has been

up and running since May of 2002. Boasting the largest selection of titles in the country, we had a very tough time trying to stump MovieForMe when searching for classic movies, cult films, and TV series.

MovieForMe offers a simple but effective search engine—though it can be a bit hairy (the the stage that pops up when a search is unsuccessful reads: "Sorry, we don't have any titles with that information in our data log of 20,000 DVDs. You might want to check the spelling"). MovieForMe also provides a more selection of handy categories in which to browse movies, including Oscar winners, Coming Soon, and Censored Films—special editions of critically acclaimed movies that usually cost an arm and a leg to buy.

MovieForMe is among the more expensive services we saw, offering a single subscription option of \$24.95 per month with a maximum withdrawal limit of only three movies, with no added value to justify the more expensive price.

Based in Markham, MovieForMe has one distribution centre in Toronto and plans to open centres in Halifax and Vancouver in the meantime. MovieForMe offers to upgrade the movie list of people living outside Ontario and Quebec from three films to four to offset longer delivery times.

So, which service should you go with? We chose Zip as Zip generates Canadians with reasonable selection of movies, the best value, great request processing times, and good customer service. The company might be less than a year old, but it has invested a lot of time and money to quickly become one of the biggest and most professional services in Canada. In short, Zip.ca represents the future of the online movie rental business.

By Chad Sapienza

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Figure 1. *Staphylococcus aureus* strains.

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1996	Microsoft	\$1,500,000	\$150,000	\$1,500,000
1997	Microsoft	\$2,000,000	\$200,000	\$2,000,000
1998	Microsoft	\$2,500,000	\$250,000	\$2,500,000
1999	Microsoft	\$3,000,000	\$300,000	\$3,000,000
2000	Microsoft	\$3,500,000	\$350,000	\$3,500,000
2001	Microsoft	\$4,000,000	\$400,000	\$4,000,000
2002	Microsoft	\$4,500,000	\$450,000	\$4,500,000
2003	Microsoft	\$5,000,000	\$500,000	\$5,000,000
2004	Microsoft	\$5,500,000	\$550,000	\$5,500,000
2005	Microsoft	\$6,000,000	\$600,000	\$6,000,000
2006	Microsoft	\$6,500,000	\$650,000	\$6,500,000
2007	Microsoft	\$7,000,000	\$700,000	\$7,000,000
2008	Microsoft	\$7,500,000	\$750,000	\$7,500,000
2009	Microsoft	\$8,000,000	\$800,000	\$8,000,000
2010	Microsoft	\$8,500,000	\$850,000	\$8,500,000
2011	Microsoft	\$9,000,000	\$900,000	\$9,000,000
2012	Microsoft	\$9,500,000	\$950,000	\$9,500,000
2013	Microsoft	\$10,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$10,000,000
2014	Microsoft	\$10,500,000	\$1,050,000	\$10,500,000
2015	Microsoft	\$11,000,000	\$1,100,000	\$11,000,000
2016	Microsoft	\$11,500,000	\$1,150,000	\$11,500,000
2017	Microsoft	\$12,000,000	\$1,200,000	\$12,000,000
2018	Microsoft	\$12,500,000	\$1,250,000	\$12,500,000
2019	Microsoft	\$13,000,000	\$1,300,000	\$13,000,000
2020	Microsoft	\$13,500,000	\$1,350,000	\$13,500,000
2021	Microsoft	\$14,000,000	\$1,400,000	\$14,000,000
2022	Microsoft	\$14,500,000	\$1,450,000	\$14,500,000
2023	Microsoft	\$15,000,000	\$1,500,000	\$15,000,000
2024	Microsoft	\$15,500,000	\$1,550,000	\$15,500,000
2025	Microsoft	\$16,000,000	\$1,600,000	\$16,000,000
2026	Microsoft	\$16,500,000	\$1,650,000	\$16,500,000
2027	Microsoft	\$17,000,000	\$1,700,000	\$17,000,000
2028	Microsoft	\$17,500,000	\$1,750,000	\$17,500,000
2029	Microsoft	\$18,000,000	\$1,800,000	\$18,000,000
2030	Microsoft	\$18,500,000	\$1,850,000	\$18,500,000
2031	Microsoft	\$19,000,000	\$1,900,000	\$19,000,000
2032	Microsoft	\$19,500,000	\$1,950,000	\$19,500,000
2033	Microsoft	\$20,000,000	\$2,000,000	\$20,000,000
2034	Microsoft	\$20,500,000	\$2,050,000	\$20,500,000
2035	Microsoft	\$21,000,000	\$2,100,000	\$21,000,000
2036	Microsoft	\$21,500,000	\$2,150,000	\$21,500,000
2037	Microsoft	\$22,000,000	\$2,200,000	\$22,000,000
2038	Microsoft	\$22,500,000	\$2,250,000	\$22,500,000
2039	Microsoft	\$23,000,000	\$2,300,000	\$23,000,000
2040	Microsoft	\$23,500,000	\$2,350,000	\$23,500,000
2041	Microsoft	\$24,000,000	\$2,400,000	\$24,000,000
2042	Microsoft	\$24,500,000	\$2,450,000	\$24,500,000
2043	Microsoft	\$25,000,000	\$2,500,000	\$25,000,000
2044	Microsoft	\$25,500,000	\$2,550,000	\$25,500,000
2045	Microsoft	\$26,000,000	\$2,600,000	\$26,000,000
2046	Microsoft	\$26,500,000	\$2,650,000	\$26,500,000
2047	Microsoft	\$27,000,000	\$2,700,000	\$27,000,000
2048	Microsoft	\$27,500,000	\$2,750,000	\$27,500,000
2049	Microsoft	\$28,000,000	\$2,800,000	\$28,000,000
2050	Microsoft	\$28,500,000	\$2,850,000	\$28,500,000
2051	Microsoft	\$29,000,000	\$2,900,000	\$29,000,000
2052	Microsoft	\$29,500,000	\$2,950,000	\$29,500,000

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Model	Year	Price	MPG	Color
1997 Honda Civic EX	1997	\$14,999	24	White
1997 Honda Civic EX	1997	\$14,999	24	White
1997 Honda Civic EX	1997	\$14,999	24	White
1997 Honda Civic EX	1997	\$14,999	24	White
1997 Honda Civic EX	1997	\$14,999	24	White

Table 2

10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100									
101	102	103	104	105	106	107	108	109	110	111	112	113	114	115	116	117	118	119	120	121	122	123	124	125	126	127	128	129	130	131	132	133	134	135	136	137	138	139	140	141	142	143	144	145	146	147	148	149	150	151	152	153	154	155	156	157	158	159	160	161	162	163	164	165	166	167	168	169	170	171	172	173	174	175	176	177	178	179	180	181	182	183	184	185	186	187	188	189	190	191	192	193	194	195	196	197	198	199	200

THE NEW INTERNATIONALIST

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1997-1998

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Assistant Professor
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University of Illinois at Chicago
 919 North Milwaukee Avenue
 Chicago, IL 60642-7073
 Tel: 312/996-3110
 Fax: 312/996-3110
 Email: gattuso@uic.edu

Sounding off:

Many thirty- and forty-somethings likely have fond memories of listening to their shiny new records while lying on their bed and wearing binaural headphones. For the younger readers, an old-timer used to buy music (imagine that?) on 12-inch black plastic and place it on a spin-ning turntable.

Today's headphones offer a lot more than mere left and right stereo sound—two new products in particular are causing quite a buzz among both music lovers on the go as well as home theater and PC junkies. Here's a look at each.

Good vibrations

Head: (Great sound) comfortable, rumble effect works, carrying pouch included

Head: A real bang

Bottom line: Perfect for PC gamers or music lovers who want hardcore bass.

Hip-hop fans, listen up: RCA's (www.rca.com) latest set of headphones, the HP900, features built-in vibration subwoofer operation and a battery-powered bass amplification boost. First, inside the

headphones itself. This product is designed for music, computer games and DVD movies.

And the effect works: Shooting weapons in 3D action flicks such as Doom 3 or Halo 2 sends jolts to each speaker which adds to the overall immersion factor...for those who want tactile feedback delivered to the head. The low-end bass also adds a nice "thump" whenever a zombie gets



popped to the wall with a wooden stake gun. Great fun.

Users can adjust the level of this bass/vibration effect with an on-line control wheel that dangles around the middle of the 4-foot headphone cord. After all, you may prefer the looser those molars with artists

such as 50 Cent over Celine Dion, or DVD flicks such as Saving Private Ryan over Love Actually.

These RCA cans (\$49.99) are full-sized headphones (8" x 6" x 5 1/2") so you can wear them over a baseball cap, but they conveniently fold up to fit in its "leatherette" travel pouch (included). They also ship with a 4.3-mhz gold-plated home stereo adapter and AA battery.

What goes surround, comes around

Now that movies, games and music are moving toward multi-channel surround sound instead of just left and right speakers, those who prefer to listen privately with headphones won't have to lose the surround sound effect.

67

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Best: This multi-direction sound in a set of headphones, works with PCs for long cord.

Best: No mini-to-PC converters included on volume control on headphones cord.

Bottom Line: A good pick if your significant other is trying to sleep and you still want surround sound in your DVD movies and video games.

The Zalman Theatre 6 head phones (model DM-10587) deliver true 5.1 sound much like the five speakers and sub woofer linking your family room. Similar products offer a simulated

surround sound effect, but these produce an authentic sound field comparable to a complete multi-channel speaker system.

Despite the fact it can be fiddly to set up for home theatre use—more on this in a moment—these headphones are convincingly good.

At the end of the \$79.95 Theatre 6 headphones (named for its six discrete channels), are three multi-coloured 3.5mm (a.k.a. "mini") jacks for a center channel, rear and front speakers. Having 5.1-supported sound cards on a computer—such as Creative's SoundBlaster Live! and Audigy cards—offer three female jacks at the back of the card to plugging in these headphone cords is a cinch. It just takes a few clicks in the software that ships with these cards to enable the 5.1 sound output.

DVD flicks such as *The Day After Tomorrow* and games such as *The Sims 2* sounded terrific with an effective spatial audio support. I even turned my head during one movie scene when I could swear a helicopter was hovering over my left shoulder.

The easy problem in connecting these headphones to a stereo receiver is that most do not have output mini jacks, and Zalman (www.zalmanusa.com) doesn't include mini-to-PC converters for the three prongs. These converters are not expensive (less than \$5 each) but we had to buy these gape widely when they should've been included. They didn't make my need for DVD movies on TV and thankfully the cord was long enough to reach the couch (300cm or 9.8 feet). Too bad they're not wireless but perhaps that's next?

These headphones are distributed in Canada by Epron (www.epron.com).

By Marc Seltman

Musicians as the go-to who also play provide a call phone. This was a new Paradies GME earphones from GME. David GME music player (US\$499). This clever product ships with two connections, one for your portable music player and the other for your cell phone. Therefore, when a call comes in, you'll hear the ring in your earphones and use music volume all automatically be turned if you decide to pick up the call. A ring microphone on the earphone cord allows you to talk hands-free. How ya'll never miss a beat or phone call.

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Media Center Extenders are small boxes that access content from a central Media Center PC, over a home network (wired or otherwise). You'll be able to use them to display your photos, or any TV in the house, or even

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Updated Price List @ hyperware.ca

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P4 3.0 \$679

P4 3.2 \$739

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ATI All-in-Wonder 9800 Pro
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12X LG DVD-R \$109
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PLEXTOR 700 \$179
PLEXTOR 712 \$189



Creative Sound Blaster
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External HD Cooler
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Logitech Wireless Optical Mouse
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ATX TV Monitor
\$69



400W ATX PSU
\$25



Logitech M1700 Wireless MB & M3000 Mouse
\$99



ASRock, P4T1E-CB 8775S
MOTHERBOARD
\$379



ATX Case w/100W & Window
\$45



17" Samsung 1190V
\$475



18 DVD-R 4x 16x100
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External HD Case
w/Cooling Fan
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80/80/200 Hard Drive Thermal Kit
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125MB - Eizo 100 3.5 Key
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8X - External DVD-RW
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- Video Input: 4 cameras per card (support up to 3 cards in a PC)
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- Resolution: 320x240 pixels per camera
- 24-bit true color RGB
- Video compression: MPEG4
- Video format: NTSC/PAL
- Recording method for login/logout

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Web Security Monitoring
Digital Alarm
Backup, Playback ability

10 Mbps total
up to 3 cards
4/8 cameras

Application Diagram



NEW! ESS1004 BAK Standalone real time security Digital Video Recorder

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- VGA output resolution up to 1280 X 1024
- Motion detection recording
- Auto recycle recording
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up music from your harddisk library. Over time, they'll let Microsoft and partners offer entirely new kinds of integrated services, like video downloading.

Media Center Extender devices are coming soon from numerous manufacturers. Microsoft will even have its own kit to turn the Xbox gaming console into a Media Center Extender.

Portable Media Centers on the other hand let you take your media experience beyond the home, doing far visual content what audio players like the Creative Nomad and Apple iPod did for digital audio. They'll store tens of hours of video and thousands of photos on a tiny hard drive and display them on a compact LCD screen.

Creative, Samsung and others have already announced Portable Media Center products for this fall. Again, Microsoft will use these devices to launch new types of services such as Major League Baseball video downloads.

Boston line, while the goal of desktop PC isn't going away any time soon, Media Center is looking like it just might be the future of digital entertainment.

By Frank Lerb

Sony VAIO Digital Studio Computer VGC-RA810G

After building studio PCs for a while based on its own proprietary software, Sony has finally embraced Microsoft's Windows XP Media Center Edition. The Sony VAIO VGC-RA810G shows the results. It's a powerhouse system for any purpose, but especially ideal as media applications.

Looking inside a spiffy matte-black case are some serious components: 3.1 GHz Pentium 4, 720GB hard drive, ATI Radeon 9800 graphics card. But the sweetener, if internal specs reveals the system's focus on media: dual IEEE 1394 ports for digital camcorder inputs; 8-video, composite and coaxial for analog video; and a 6.8 set of audio inputs.

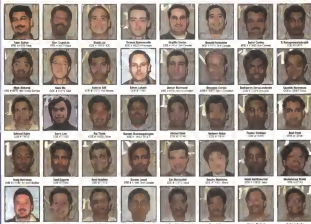
You launch Microsoft's Media Center either by double-clicking its icon or by pressing a button on the detachable remote control. Push them it's easy to access stored photos, play music and watch earlier record TV programs. Playback of TV shows from the hard drive is essentially indistinguishable from the original broadcast. Sony also throws in a bunch of software extras: Adobe Photoshop Album Starter Edition, Adobe Photoshop Elements, Click to DVD, WinDVD player and various others.

The bundled stereo system are the only disappointment. Sound is good, but for vibrations alone the system should be upgraded to a better surround-sound rig. In the family room, of course, sound would go through the home theatre sound system. All in all, a very cool package ... for my money it's the looks.



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Multiple media

After breaking new ground online, Broken Saints looks to DVD, print, film and beyond

If you are a fan of science-fiction/fantasy and Flash animation, chances are you've already pointed your Web browser to Broken Saints (www.brokensaints.com). The online saga, conceived and created in 2000 by a North Vancouver-based trio of multimedia and game developers, has been visited by more than three million people since its launch. The team of writer/director/producer Brooke Burgess, technical director/Flash designer Ian Kirby, and art director/character designer Andrew West used their own time and resources, with support from Web design firm Switch Interactive and his associates. The result is a new form of online storytelling they call "cinematic literature," which fuses text, Flash animation, and music into an experience that blurs the line between reading and viewing.

Though the 24-part story—which tells of four characters from different corners of the planet who are unwitting participants in a corporate/military conspiracy and who must come together to save the world—was completed in mid 2003, Broken Saints fans have produced an appetite for more, according to Kim Violante, associate producer for Budget Monks Productions, the company formed by the Broken Saints team.

Instead of a sequel (which is possible, but not currently in the works according to Violante), Budget Monks will be releasing Broken Saints on DVD on the end of October. Though it is the same story, Violante says there is plenty in the 12-hour, four-disc set that will appeal to Broken Saints fans.





The biggest difference in the migration from the Web to DVD is the addition of a voice narration track. Among the actors starring the Broken Saints classic series is William B. Davis (X-Files' Cigarette-smoking Max). Less well known, but with multiple voice over

credits and roles in sci-fi/fantasy productions (a side effect of being a busy film and TV actor in Vancouver), are David Kaye, Jorge Jaud, Kirby Morrow and Michael J. Gough.

Also, the artwork has been upgraded and sound remastered in 5.1 Dolby Digital—a great addition for those with home theatre systems.

Like other DVDs, the Broken Saints set will include multi-language subtitle tracks, creator commentaries, interactive games, behind-the-scenes features, documentaries, biographies, Easter eggs, and even Broken Legends, a fan-created spoof.

While the DVD release is consuming a lot of the Budget Monks team's time, it is only the first of possibly many exciting merchandise items. First up is a full colour comic book published by Dark Horse Entertainment and expected to debut in summer 2005. The Broken Saints story is also being developed for next-generation video game consoles and Budget Monks has also been approached about doing a full length feature film and/or mini-series. Though it's not yet clear whether there would be live action or animated.

By Megan Johnston

DVD details

When the Broken Saints DVD is released Oct. 26 for \$29.99, it will be available only through the Web site www.brokenfilms.com. Retail distribution is still being negotiated, but Budget Monks' Ken Volante says they expect the DVD set will be available through consumer electronics outlets like Future Shop and Best Buy, as well as record stores and some comic book stores, in January 2005.

Big in Brazil

Though Volante describes the Broken Saints Web site's core demographic as 18 to 35-year-olds who are tech-savvy and people with a counter culture vibe, she notes that the appeal of the online story has spread into the spiritual community and says that the site is getting more feedback from older and retired people. According to geographical stats from the site, gathered by a sample of 2,500 questionnaire entries, the story also has a broad appeal across globally.

North American visitors top the list, with Europeans close behind, followed by visitors being the most represented from that region, and Australia and Japan. Asia, Africa and Mexico account for nearly half of those from outside America and, for some reason, we're huge in Brazil! "Very funny."

Flash forward

Though Broken Saints is very much in a state of its own, the variety of features Flash development has taken is astounding. If you have a high-speed internet connection and your browser meets the requirements, click on the Streaming link on the Broken Saints Web site www.brokenfilms.com. "It's a gateway providing info, entertainment and

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Star Trek: The Original Series [Season 1]

www.startrek.com



Every story must have a beginning, and this is where the Star Trek Universe got its start. Nearly forty years on, it seems very chameleonic, but that's only in comparison to all of the sci-fi shows that have come since — many of which owe their lives to the original Trek.

This season pack, which comes a Popcorn-movie-shaped package, contains all 29 episodes from the first series in a single bundle (finally!)

A number of bonus features give insight into the creation of the series, the ongoing development of the characters, and the battles with the network. There are also a number of hidden files (dubbed Post Mortem Logs) scattered around the eighth disc. It's hard to overstate the influence the show had on network television; for all the Kirk meets girl movie, the show also broke new ground for strong female characters as well as for non-white actors. In so many ways, it wasn't just a show about the future, it *was* the future. The biggest disappointment with this set is that the original pilot, *The Cage*, wasn't included, but rumor has it that it will appear on the fly of set. All those seasons of the original series will be out in season packs by the end of 2004.

TV on DVD

Millennium [Season 1] / Harsh Realm [complete]

www.bvsvd.com



Following up a wildly successful series like *X-Files* has to be exceptionally tough, but Chris Carter has now tried twice, with *Millennium* and *Harsh Realm*. *Millennium*, which lasted three seasons, was the more successful of the two, plugging into both fear of evil and the terror leading up to the end of the millennium. [It also featured the most beautiful Lance Henriksen as the star of the show, always a plus.] The complete first season includes twenty-two episodes, plus commentaries, a making-of documentary, a featurette, TV

spots and more. *Harsh Realm* fared much worse, lasting only three episodes before being canceled; the other two seasons are exclusively on the net, as well as a making-of featurette, commentary and more. If you missed these when they came out, now's your chance to catch up.

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Create-A-Sim Mania

Similar to the first game, *The Sims 2* players can take control over existing characters or spend some time creating their own unique ones. The new "Create-A-Sim" tool lets you build any kind of sim imaginable by selecting from thousands of clothing options, hair styles, body types and facial features. You can make your Sim look like Jessica Simpson or Marge Simpson—it's up to you. Because of these options, and the fact there's hundreds of 3D house designs and layouts to choose from, no two games should look the same.

- ★ **Fun, addictive, deep**
- ★ **Attractive 3-D graphics**
- ★ **May cause an emotional attachment**

★ **Not a blue A.I. dog**

Food thought: *The Sims 2* doesn't play too far from what made its predecessor such a worldwide phenomenon, yet it adds so much more to create a second best of the series, while trying to new ones.

Along with day-to-day tasks that range from cleaning a flooded toilet to learning how to cook a good meal, *The Sims 2* introduces a "Life Score" to measure how well each individual Sim is advancing through selectable goals such as buying a house, creating a large family or owning a company. This feature gives players something grander to strive for.

Also new to this sequel is a feature called "Simi Movie Making" that helps gamers unleash their inner director. Players can create a kind of television sitcom by recording and editing actions of their Sims, adding dialogue then wrapping them over the timeline with others, if so desired.

Other new features in



The Sims 2 include new body and facial animations, the ability to build dwellings over two stories and plenty of new objects to decorate the houses with.

Games will be hard pressed to find faults in *The Sims 2*. Minor blemishes exist, such as relatively long load times and the odd A.I. glitch. As an example of the latter, Sims accidentally caused a lunch line at his job as a junior cook and was docked a day's pay, but when she arrived at home a new cow popped up that said she received a promotion. Neither problem ruined the otherwise flawless experience.

Easily the best computer game of the year, *The Sims 2* will not disappoint.

By Marc Saltzman

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Twice as hot: Dual-layer DVD burning

Though dual-layer DVD burners have just become available for home computer users, dual-layer has long been a standard feature on the DVD movies that you buy at your local shop.

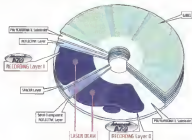
A single-layer DVD holds about 4.7 gigabytes, which may not be enough to hold an entire movie. Thankfully, your DVD player can refocus the lens

right through the layer it's been playing, and then start reading a whole new layer of data underneath, bringing the single-side capacity of a DVD up to 8.5 GB.

If this seems a bit strange, imagine looking at the stars on the surface of a window pane and then refocusing your eyes to something outside the window... the stars disappear. Same effect when you look through a window with a bug screen too. (Dual-layer DVD, recording isn't just that simple, but you get the idea.)

The term "dual-layer" is a bit of a misnomer, as each blank dual-layer DVD has several right-separate layers. There's a polycarbonate substrate on either side—the clear plastic material at the top and the bottom that holds everything together. With single-layer recording media, there's a layer of dye with a reflective layer behind it.

With dual-layer that's doubled, but the bottom reflective layer is only semi-reflective, allowing the laser to refocus right through it to the upper reflective layer when it needs to get to the second level of data. A spacer layer sits between the two reflective



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layers, and with most discs there'll be a label on top of the disc. That's quite a lot of construction for something so thin.

Typically, single-layer discs are recorded from the inside towards the outside, but with double layers, the layers are recorded in different directions to minimize data corruption when one layer is full. In other words, when the first layer comes to an end at the outside edge of the disc, the second layer continues at the outside and then works its way back to the centre. There may be a lot of a cluster with video discs as the player switches layers—something you'll notice with longer DVD movies—but it's

almost certainly more minimal than if the laser had to track back as the centre groove to pick up the data stream.

Getting dual-layer burning working in your computer system may not be as simple as removing your old DVD burner and popping in the new one as your DVD burning software may not know how to properly manage the "break point" of the data (or where the disc swaps data from layer one to layer two).

Most new versions of the major burning packages handle dual-layer including software from Adobe, Nero, iAT, Poxie, iSonic, Cyberlink, Intervideo, Piranha, Sonic, Pogo and more. There are a few caveats though, so before you buy you may want to check the support sections of the company websites, also keep in mind that dual-layer burners may come with burning software, too.

Those who remember the early days of DVD recordable discs will be thrilled (and right) to see the \$20 price tag for each blank dual-layer DVD but as always, it'll come down in price as the technology catches on.

While it's expected that most of the dual-layer discs that users burn will be compatible with the same drives and DVD players that currently handle single-layer burned discs, with a technology this new you should always expect a few incompatibilities. As always, manufacturers are working on improving their firmware to ensure maximum compatibility across the spectrum, but for the short term, if the data you burn needs to be played back on a wide variety of different machines, you may want to hold off until the end of the year.

By Sean Connolly

LaCie's D2 DVD±RW is dual dual dual

There are a few dual-layer burners on the shelves, right now, but one of the most flexible is LaCie's new D2 external model.

Not only does the D2 burn dual-layer discs, it also handles both DVD±RW and DVD±RW media, books to your computer using either USB 2.0 or FireWire, and is compatible with either Mac or PC. Use LaCie's other external drives (both hard drives and optical burners), the new disc comes in a rugged aluminum casing with grooves along the side for rock mounting or stacking. We had a chance to look at the D2 DVD±RW burner, but keep your eyes open for the next D2 version, due out by the time you read this.

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TV on DVD

Six Feet Under (Seasons 1-2)

www.hbo.com

With the Sopranos and Oz on the schedule, HBO definitely has a knack for television shows based on non-traditional concepts, and the network continues its winning streak with Six Feet Under, centered on a family business... a funeral home.

The question is, how do you help clients deal with their loss when you're dealing with all your own serious personal matters? The show's writer is American literary titan Saul, which should give you an idea of the dark, poignantly found here. The cast include bonus features like commentary, behind-the-scenes features, deleted scenes and more.

Kids in the Hall (Season 1)

www.kidsincanada.com

Canadian comedy has always had a bit of a twisted edge, and nowhere was that more apparent than with Toronto's Kids in the Hall. The first season of the show captures some of the troupe's best work, made while they were still finding their television feet.

Not all of the recurring characters are here yet, but you'll get a good dose of the Headbasher and Saddy Cole. The cast features new interviews with members of the troupe, as well as archival footage from their early days at the Rivoli. Season 2 is due out mid-November.

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Mark and Mandy (Season 1)

www.paramount.com/homeentertainment/

What happens when an alien with behavioral problems lands in small-town Colorado? Mark and Mandy, an alien couple. Most people remember Robin Williams' widely-attired drab, but the social commentary at the end of each episode could also be thought-provoking. No bonus features here, but all 26 season one episodes, including the Mark and Mandy Special that started it all off.

Simpsons (Seasons 1-4)

www.foxvideo.com

Say what you will about the newer episodes of the Simpsons, but it's hard to say living with any of the early seasons of the show. Though the first season was a bit rough around the edges, all four DVD sets currently available feature classic shows as well as storyboards, commentary on every episode and Easter eggs throughout... enough to keep things interesting even if you've seen every episode a zillion times already.

The Bernie Mac Show (Season 1)

www.foxvideo.com

Stand-up comedians grating their own TV act out is nothing new, but Bernie Mac's take on the family sitcom with no home-improvement or Garry Show. The set includes all 22 episodes from season one, plus commentary and an ABC Special on Bernie Mac.

TV on DVD

Star Trek: Voyager (Seasons 1-4)

www.startrek.com

When it comes to the Star Trek universe, Voyager has always gotten a bad rap, but a good deal of that was from DS9 and Next Generation fans who were expecting something different. Upon reflection, Voyager offered far more than it seemed. Like two crews that were in conflict with each other and then joined them together on the other side of the galaxy. Not only did the show offer a more adventure-oriented format more in keeping with the original series, but it also showed a group of misfits exploring their own identities. Each season includes a ton of special features, including character profiles, season overviews and a number of hidden files. The first four seasons are all new, and all seven sets will be out by the end of the year.

Northern Exposure (Season 1)

www.universalstudios.com/home

Fish out of water stories often make for great television. Take Northern Exposure, which takes a big city doctor and drops him into small town Upernivik, Alaska, home to a wide variety of eccentricities. Not only did the show treat all of the characters with respect, it shed light on each of all kinds, including First Nations apologetics and Judaism. The first season ships in a zip up parka, and comes with many oriented scenes, outtakes, and more. Season 2, due out at the beginning of November, also comes with its own zip up jacket.

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Users that invest in SanDisk's Cruiser Micro (USB) flash drives. Setting up a transfer (see pg. 103) can extend its functionality beyond just file transferring with the Cruiser Micro MP3 Companion.

While some smaller USB flash drives will fit into the MP3 Companion, they won't be recognized and the MP3 or WMA files on the drive won't play. Instead, users will be prompted to "Insert Cruiser".

The plastic casing feels a bit flimsy and the Companion is larger than some other flash-based MP3 players (most notably, Creative's MuVoLine). Also, once the price of the Cruiser drive and MP3 Companion are added together, users may wonder why they would pass up similarly priced and functional MP3 players.



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As you'd expect for a show called *Homework*, things can occasionally get a bit gross, but it's the characters that drive the series, not the body count. The sets come with bonus features that include interviews with the writers, commentators, some behind-the-scenes, and more.

Futurework [Season 1-4]

Abstract

Always in the shadow of the Simpsons, Futurama nevertheless managed four seasons before the powers that be pulled the plug. All four seasons are now CD, crammed with pop-culture references, guest appearances from famous 20th-century celebs and shade comments from the best robot ever. The beginning of each set is overloaded with intro videos, but each disc also comes with deleted scenes, mini-features, and the occasional error-free

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Finding interior happiness

Technology planning at the blueprint stage

So you've just moved into your newly built home or condo and the last step to make it truly feel like home is to plug in your stereo system and computer. Trouble is, while the space may be new, the tangle of wires near your computer is all too familiar, as is the elaborate stereo cable concealment in your living room. Your dream home doesn't have to turn out that way—if you start planning your audio/video and technology set-up from the blueprint stage.

Making technology a priority rather than an afterthought in your home design can help integrate everything from home theater to Internet to security systems, making those systems a focal point in the design stage. Whether recommended by your architect or builder or forepackaged by you, custom multimedia companies can not only control the technology you think you need, but also educate you about options you hadn't even considered. As such, getting them involved early is key.

"Sometimes clients limit their conversation based on their knowledge of what's available. So we can bring insights that might turn a pleasure into a multimedia room, or vice versa," says Marilyn Sanford, President of Vancouver-based custom installers La Scala Integrated Media. "If we can get in at an early enough stage we can influence the design, which can cover things like wireless access points, lighting control, cabling, and room design."

Although the trend toward fully automating houses is still in its infancy, as technology develops, the nature of specialty audio firms getting involved at the blueprint stage has been around for a while. Audio One, a Toronto-based specialty audio retailer, has been involved at the blueprint stage for many years.

"We've been doing blueprint audio since the day we opened," says Anthony D'Assante, President of Toronto-based retailer Audio One. A 30-year veteran of the business, D'Assante has witnessed audio design become more and more complex as computer peripherals replace tape; diagrams and installations move from basic stereo set-ups to full home integration. "In those days it was very simple, these days we're sometimes dealing with upwards of

The New factor

In today's integrated houses, home theatre installation is just the beginning. Here are some of the cool things you can now get your house to do for you:

- Wake you up on a soft and dark winter morning with light and warmers when it's early and dim as it becomes light
- Move you to stroll through the dogwood cover art of your album on a laptop, to choose your favourite music
- Welcome you into your driveway by negotiating transceivers on your car and turning on outside lights accordingly, and respond to undercar sensors and appearance security measures
- Make your lights operate on a random sequence while you're on vacation
- Allow you to listen to music on the road via undercar speakers
- Keep in touch with your cottage by allowing you to log in via the Internet, and monitor its security or turn up the heat before you arrive for a weekend getaway



\$5,000 fees [2 000 metres] of wire."

While sources like the Internet and Home Theater mag sites provide customers with vital information, there is also a lot of misinformation out there, according to La Scala's Marilyn Sanford. "More and more people are getting misinformed. Little bits of information put there create an incomplete picture for the client, which typically excites their imagination. Their expectations are high but they don't really have the knowledge to figure out whether it's possible," Sanford adds. "We spend a lot of time explaining the process, where the industry is going. Often people are looking for simplification that can help them weave through the confusion that they're seeing." On the other hand there are a lot of exciting options that the average person might not think possible (see sidebar: The New Factor).

While some of the more futuristic sounding technologies are initially installed in more high budget homes, many features are becoming increasingly available. "There are still many products that average consumers can purchase for their homes," Krumm-Hall's Eric Haskilla says, adding that other technologies will also come down in price as they become more common.

Although homeowners are becoming increasingly savvy about what's available, it's still up to the experts to educate them on the specifics. As Haskilla puts it, "Most customers have a general sense of what they're looking for but when it comes down to specifics they rely on the expert professionals."

By Sue Barrows

How I learned to stop worrying and love my cheap home theatre

A broke movie lover shares the story of how he made his home theatre dreams come true on a shoestring budget

I've always wanted a high-end home theatre, but I've never had the money to make it happen. Whether it was another year of school to pay for or a wedding to finance, the cash was simply never there.

After I was married and began to think about starting a family, the dream of buying a fancy home theatre seemed about as unrealistic as a trip to the moon. So I made a decision: I would stop waiting for money that I may never have. I would sacrifice high-end quality and search the market for the best home theatre I could find that would meet my meagre budget.

I spent weeks in research. It became painfully obvious that plasma displays and interlaced tech large-screen options were well out of reach. I knew I could afford around \$1,500, which put me in small-screen projection, tiny LCD, or garish picture tube territory.

So, acting on a suggestion from a co-worker, I gave up on TVs and began looking at digital projectors.

The greatest advantage projectors carry over televisions is their ability to deliver a massive picture. Even low-end projectors can cast clear pictures of between 60 and 12 [measured diagonally]. However, projectors also have a major disadvantage: for optimal viewing, a darkened room is required. Another

drawer: home theatre projectors are priced similarly to plasma televisions, they start at around \$3,000 and go up to \$10,000.

But when about the projectors we see in offices and schools? I started looking at these so-called "data" projectors and found some starting as low as \$300. But the difference in price isn't arbitrary: there are several quality-based distinctions between home theatre and data projectors. The \$10,000 Sony PLV-F1 LCD home theatre projector delivers an incredibly bright picture at high resolution (1080i, 1368x768 pixels) with deep blacks and exacting colour detail/functionality. Conversely, the \$1,000 Sharp FO-8205 data projector delivers a dimmer picture at a lower resolution (SVGA, 800x600 pixels) with less color and picture control functionality. However, upon storing details of a few data projectors I found the edge quite acceptable. A 10" screen gave a long way.

I spent a few nights online going to major projector manufacturers and community Web sites. Apparently there were a lot of movie lovers out there with budgets similar to mine who had chosen cheap projectors, and the vast majority of these people seemed quite satisfied with their decisions.

After a couple of weeks of checking out various retail outlets to see what was available and browsing user reviews, I bought a Sony VPL-PS190 for a little less than \$1,200. It throws a fairly bright picture (3200 ANSI lumens), has satisfactory resolution and sports a decent amount of picture adjustment functionality, including vertical keystoneing. I knew there were plenty of better projectors in the world, but this was the best one I could afford.

Projector in hand, I went looking for a projector screen. I found screens ranging from \$50-\$5000, depending on size, fabric, quality, and automation. (a Lite, one of the most respected screen manufacturers in the world, offers quality pull-down screens just over \$1K in size for around \$250. However on a tip from a photographer friend, I checked out a few lightweight, rapidly cones and found several pretty good manual 120" screens on sale for less than \$100 each. Bingo.

My theatre was almost done, and I had a couple hundred bucks to spare. Just enough for a set of entry-level 5.1 sur-





purchase a decent projector, a 57" screen, and a surround sound system. Our family and friends have already clocked over 500 hours with our theatre in the last six months. I may never have the 120,000-hour theatre of my dreams, but I'm perfectly happy to settle for this.

By Chad Sapienza

round sound speakers. I chose Altec Lansing's \$300 series, ate gain in design and more than enough power for my apartment.

Upon arriving home I took my flail into our spare room. Two hours later my wife saw me emerge just long enough to hand-paint two lounge chairs into the room. An hour later I invited her in. The screen was pulled down to cover an entire wall including the room's sole window, creating a near perfect darkness. The speakers were placed strategically around the room and the projector mounted to the ceiling. I seated, pressed all the power buttons, and watched the 57" screen flicker to life.

Sure, there are plenty of home theater systems that outsize my little setup, but I don't know of anything better that costs less. For just under \$1,500 I managed to

Projector buyer's guide

ANSI lumens: Brightness; the higher the number, the better. Even if you're on a budget, don't settle for less than 1200. There are many projectors under \$1500 with 1200-1400 lumens.

Resolution: Essentially the amount and clarity of detail in the picture. Most low-end projectors will have a native resolution of 800x600. If you feel better, jump on it.

Bulb life: Projector bulbs don't last forever, and they can cost more than \$1000 to replace. Try to make sure your projector is compatible with a cheaper bulb (around \$300), and that it has a long life, preferably around 2000 hours.

Features to look out:

- **Keystone correction** — allows you to fix horizontal lens-associated vertical displacement caused by projecting at an angle.
- **Input ports** — most low-end projectors provide video, S-video, and PC ports. Make sure your projector has the port you need.
- **Throw distance** — if the more you intend to use the projector in is less than 10' deep, try to find a projector with a short throw distance.

Also, don't lay down any cash before visiting www.projectorcentral.com. It's a community of projector aficionados, and one of the preeminent sources of information during my search. It provides technical information and reviews for almost every projector on the market.

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Digital Photography Tutorial 9

Storing multi-megapixel files



NetDisk Unit From Xosha (www.xosha.com)

Several months ago I popped a 120 gigabyte hard drive into my computer and thought it would be more than enough for a few years' worth of photos. Well, guess what, I've been out shopping for more storage.

As we move to higher megapixel cameras, image storage becomes a key issue for photographers. In the computer world, finding enough storage has always been a matter of balancing cost and convenience. Hard drives were once quite expensive, so cheaper alternatives like tape backups were popular, even though getting data from them was cumbersome. Recordable CDs and DVDs fall into this category. I routinely use CDs to archive images, but finding the correct CD and releasing an image isn't nearly as convenient as having it right in the hard drive.

The good news is that today, hard drives are no longer so expensive. CDs are often sold for

their low cost, but I recently paid \$199 (on sale) for a 160 GB external drive, which means the cost per megabyte was actually less than for premium-quality CD blanks (external drives are even less expensive). The new drive easily swallowed half the contents of my overstuffed internal drive, and since it uses USB 2.0, data access speed is quite decent.

External units have other advantages. The same external drive can be used with Macs and PCs, desktops and notebooks. Adding this storage is a simple matter of plugging another drive into the appropriate port—you don't have to pull the computer apart. One of the golden rules of data security is to store backups in a different location than your computer, and the portability of an external hard drive lets you easily do this if you want to use it strictly for backup.

A very cool feature of the unit I purchased—a NetDisk unit from Xosha (www.xosha.com)—is an onboard Fast Ethernet port. If you have a small network at home, you can plug it directly into a switch or router (no host computer needed) and it becomes available to all the computers on the LAN as a network-attached storage device.

I continue to use CDs to archive image files, which duplicates what's on the external drive, so at any given time I have two copies of my images stored outside the computer. This might sound like overkill, but it's never a good idea to trust precious or irreplaceable files to a single medium. Recordable CDs have been known to deteriorate after just a few years—although CD manufacturers are addressing this. For example, Fujifilm markets blank media called CD-R for Photo, which are claimed to last 100 years.

As for hard drives, since they are mechanical devices they will eventually wear out or fail. That said, hard drives have become cost-effective for secondary storage. External drives are convenient and capacities keep growing. Already you can buy terabyte drives. The Bigger Disk from LaCie (www.lacie.com) holds one terabyte while the Bigger Disk Extreme is good for 1.6 terabytes. Don't be surprised that you'll never even test half once you've used that 30-plus megapixel camera for a while.

By David Tanaka

Digital Photography Hacks: 100 Industrial Strength Tips and Tools

By Derrick Story
O'Reilly, 2004
ISBN 0-596-00444-3
Paperback, 360 pages
Price: \$42.95

In the preface, author Derrick Story describes a hack as "a 'quick and dirty' solution to a problem, or a clever way to get something done." Does the book live up to its title?

If a hack makes you think of some hard-made contraption built of duct tape and spare parts, or a reprogramming of the digital camera's processor, then that part of the title might disappoint. Most of the solutions aren't about that. They are, however, descriptions of good photographic practice and that's why the book is worth considering.

It is well organized and provides some useful tips and tools to help you take better pictures under unusual or difficult conditions. And yes, it does include some clever or creative ways to solve problems that could be considered genuine hacks.

By David Tanaka

DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY HACKS

100 Industrial Strength
Tips & Tools



TV on DVD

Dead Like Me (Season 1)

www.mgm.com/dvd/

Bang, you're dead! What's mine? Well, if you're unlucky you may be recruited as a reaper, collecting the souls of others who have also shuffled off this mortal coil. *Dead Like Me* was skewed look at the afterlife, following a number of reluctant reapers as they retrieve the recently departed, fight with each other, fill out paperwork and... do laundry. The DVD set includes deleted scenes, audio commentary, and a featurette.



Once upon a time, when you wanted to watch your favourite TV shows, you had to check the listings to find out when it came on, and then make sure your bed was placed in front of the set at that time... If you weren't there, too bad. Then, with VCRs and PVRs, you could record shows when you weren't at home, and watch them later. Now, there's hope for the truly engorged: you can just walk until they release the whole series on DVD. In the past there have been a few shows released on DVD one or two episodes at a time but the new trend is releasing an entire season's worth of programs in a multi-disc set. We chose *Dead Like Me*, and taken up less space on your DVD shelf. The television reaction of the first DVD shows has exploded, from now shows like *Beck* and *King of the Hill* to old favorites like *ALF*, the *6-Track* and *Knights Police*. It doesn't matter if it's cool as heck or absolute stink... sooner or later it'll probably be out on DVD.

By Sean Connolly

Family Guy (Seasons 1&2)

www.fxtv.com

Add together a talking dog, a homicidal infant, a clueless dad and these other morris that look normal by comparison, and you have *Family Guy*. This animated series is already over the top in some ways, but one of the episodes was so over the top that it was banned... and included on the third season as a bonus feature. There are also commentaries, deleted scenes, and featurettes.

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Submit your photographs, along with the information from the first bullet, by October 2004. You can submit up to three photographs, all of which must be accompanied by a submission form. Entries must be submitted via email. They should be no bigger than 500 KB and no smaller than 100 KB. No photo per email.

Selected Photo: Photos must be chosen by October 15th, 2004. Winners must provide valid identification upon winning prize. The prize awarded is an unlimited number of copies of the photo for use, in print and in its digital form. Entries must be submitted by email and not in person or be submitted with a copy of the photo to the office of the company, or advertising or promotional agency. The winners will be selected by HUB by October 2004. HUB has a right of all rights reserved as to the photo taken then. Winners will be contacted by telephone or email. In the event that they cannot be contacted within the time specified then the photo contest cannot proceed will be selected. All entries become the property of HUB and may be used in subsequent advertisements for the contest. All entries must be submitted by email and not in print form.

HUB's Photo Spree contest form. All submissions must contain this information. Send to contest@publishing.ca

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Title of Entry: _____

Camera Used: _____

Software Used: _____

Donkey Konga

Publisher: Nintendo Developer: Nintendo Platform: GameCube



Music games have proven their popularity with a certain breed of gamer. Now, Nintendo is hoping that real gamers own a GameCube.

Donkey Konga is Nintendo's first serious attempt at a music game, and it's a fairly well thought out one. The game starts with a pair of very robust and altogether neat bongo drums that will be put to use in future Nintendo titles, the company says.

The basic premise is for gamers to hit the drums in time with the music and the according symbols as they scroll across the screen. The game incorporates a few different kinds of drums like left drums, right drums (both together), claps and drum rolls on either or both of the drums. Players are ranked on how closely they keep the song's rhythm, up to four players can get in on the action in various competitive modes either with their own drums or using a controller. Using a controller instead of the drums peripheral is functional but not nearly as much fun.

While there are some licensed songs (Queen's We Will Rock You in particular is a perfect fit for the game's drum-beating style), the majority of the songs are either unlicensed (like Happy Birthday) or Nintendo's own (i.e. the Super Mario Bros. music). While some of the included songs are great and are a good fit, the available selection starts to wear a thin after a relatively short time. That said these difficulty levels and a variety of game modes certainly help to keep things fresh.

In single player mode, gamers unlock new difficulty levels, drum sounds that can be used in the game and new challenges. However, getting other gamers in on the action where the games replay value and much of its appeal is found.

By Andrew Moore-Griffin

Pure Pinball

Publisher: SE Games Developer: Irem Interactive Platform: Xbox

Deep gameplay is great. The same goes for a good storyline, interesting character development and HD graphics.

However, sometimes you just want to pick up a controller and play a quick game. Enter Pure Pinball, a budget title from SE games that provides the gaming equivalent of a quick fix. There's no storyline to speak of, no real depth to gameplay and while there are provocatively clad women to greet gamers in the title screens, their roles are purely non-speaking. Pure Pinball gives gamers access to a fairly true to-life pinball simulation on four tables, each with its own scoring dynamic, layout, bonuses and sound bites. Consider that with better than a dozen viewpoints—that vary from the useful, like a scrolling 3-D table view, to the superfluous, like the close up view of the ball—the ability to turn glass reflection on or off and the ability to pause and resume and virtual pinball offers some benefits over the real deal. And that is to say nothing of the cost associated with or the space taken up by four separate pinball machines.

Consider aside, pin ball (to own a pinball) is somewhat lacking in this cost. While the ball physics are impressive and fairly true to life, they offer none of the subtlety associated with knocking a real ball bouncing around a real pinball table. The to see a few exploits per table that can be used to rack up amazing scores and almost infinite replays.

Sound is a little lame too, the sound of the ball on the table is akin to a marble rolling around on a wooden tray. Also, while gamers can post and compare scores online through Xbox Live, there is no multi-player gameplay to speak of—online or otherwise. The exclusion of multiplayer is a glaring deficiency in Pure Pinball.

By Andrew Moore-Griffin



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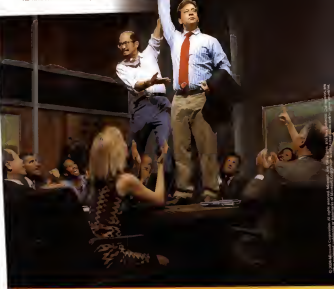
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